

ions held by a powerful group of their constituents.

The proponents of the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bills are making strenuous efforts to promote their propaganda and legislative campaigns. It is important that members of the medical profession be equally alert, in order that the best interests of the public health may be conserved. Officers and Program Committees of county medical societies have here a definite responsibility.

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF C.M.A. HOUSE OF DELEGATES—NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS OF SCIENTIFIC SECTIONS

Minutes of Meetings of House of Delegates.

—This issue of the OFFICIAL JOURNAL carries the minutes of the meetings of the C.M.A. House of Delegates, held in Los Angeles on May 6-7, 1945. Reference is made thereto because members should at least run their eyes over the records of the proceedings of the constituted highest authority of the California Medical Association. This is the more important since, in order to comply with the directives of the Office of Defense Transportation, many of the component county societies refrained from sending full delegations to this year's annual session.

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Newly Elected Officers of Scientific Sections.—In the current issue, on advertising page 4 appears the complete roster of newly elected officers of the scientific sections of the California Medical Association: Anesthesiology; Dermatology and Syphilology; Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat; General Medicine; General Surgery; Industrial Medicine and Surgery; Neuropsychiatry; Obstetrics and Gynecology; Pathology and Bacteriology; Pediatrics; Public Health; Radiology; and Urology.

Attention is called thereto, because members of the Association who may wish to present papers at the annual session to be held in 1946 in Los Angeles, should write at an early day to the secretary of the Section to be addressed. Such co-operation will be much appreciated by Section Officers, who will welcome also, suggestions on topics for conjoint meetings, panel discussions, symposia or special papers.

McBurney's Point.—Although the sign for operative intervention in appendicitis described by Charles McBurney was subjected to much controversial opinion, the expression "tenderness over McBurney's point" remains in common use. On this description, contained in the article entitled "Discussion on Appendicitis; Indications for Early Laparotomy," rests McBurney's claim to medical fame. It is generally acknowledged that McBurney was an outstanding and able surgeon of his time. —Warner's *Calendar of Medical History*.

This glorious Union shall not perish! Precious legacy of our fathers, it shall go down honored and cherished to our children. Generations unborn shall enjoy its privileges as we have done; and if we leave them poor in all besides, we will transmit to them the boundless wealth of its blessings!

—Edward Everett, *Speech*, at Union Meeting in Faneuil Hall, Boston.

EDITORIAL COMMENT†

ASCORBIC ACID VS. THE COMMON COLD

As part of a detailed study of the epidemiology of the common cold the late Wm. B. Brown¹ and his associates of the Division of Health Education, Stephens College, Columbia, Mo., gathered statistical evidence as to the value of ascorbic acid in the prophylaxis and therapy of common cold infections.

Bergquist² and Glazebrook³ and others had previously alleged that in their hands administration of large doses of ascorbic acid daily not only reduced the incidence of common colds but shortened by half the average number of work days lost by each patient who developed this infection. The Stephens College data were collected during 1942-43, for a group of 1,600 girl students. The students were requested to report to the health center at the first recognized indication that a cold might be developing. The initial symptoms were noted and recorded and an examination made. From this evidence an estimate was made of the probable number of hours since the presumed onset.

Alternate students were given either 1 gram ascorbic acid by mouth or without the knowledge of the subject a placebo in the form of 1 gram of citric acid. The subjects were asked to rest, keep warm, retire early, push fluids, take no other medication, and on the following morning to report again to the health center. At this second report an additional gram of ascorbic acid or of the placebo was given. Decision was made as to outcome on the second day, 48 hours after beginning of the management described. Examination at this time revealed that the cold had either not developed or had persisted.

With nose involvements not reported until 8 to 28 hours after presumed onset 21 per cent of the cases were spontaneously checked in the group given citric acid and 59 per cent checked in the group given massive doses of vitamin C. This is a difference of 38 per cent of all cases in which the infection was apparently aborted by large doses of ascorbic acid.

Brown suggests no theory to account for this therapeutic effect. He calls attention to the fact that massive doses of ascorbic acid have been reported to increase the ability of animals to withstand traumatic shock,⁴ shock due to loss of blood,⁵ or to prolonged subjection to the gravitational stress of the upright position.⁶ It is a common assumption among European clinicians⁷ that the common cold is an initial virus infection complicated in its later stages by secondary bacterial invaders. Accepting this theory, Brown is of the opinion that massive doses of ascorbic

† This department of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE presents editorial comments by contributing members on items of medical progress, science and practice, and on topics from recent medical books or journals. An invitation is extended to all members of the California Medical Association to submit brief editorial discussions suitable for publication in this department. No presentation should be over five hundred words in length.